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## DISCUSSION.

## “OBJECTIVE FREEDOM.”

This is the title of an instructive article by Professor Prabhu Dute Sastri, in the April, 1921, number of THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS. The article brings out one of the most important points of Hindu Life and Ethics—namely *Jibanmukti*. As the learned writer very pertinently observes, the realisation of life by raising it to a non-moral plane is against “the general trend of Western thought” and we may add that it is quite opposed to all theistic metaphysics. Consequently the conception of *Jibanmukti* is peculiarly Indian and Sankarite.

But the exact idea of a *Jibanmukti*, as sought to be given by the writer, is not altogether unexceptionable. It betrays much of the popular misconceptions that so often hang around the monism of the Sankarites. Speaking of the state of a real *Yogi* or *Jibanmukta*, the writer says that the *Yogi* “leads a life of complete indifferentism, like that of an inert block of stone, as it were” (p. 304, u. 10–12). Surely, this sentence is typical of a certain section of critics who smell nihilism in the *Suddha-advaita* philosophy. But, as a careful consideration of the teachings of Sankara will show, *Moksha* is not really steeling and deadening life against the world and making it indifferent and impervious to all the good and bad things in it. It is really re-valuation of the world after the correct conception of the Universe. In our ignorance, as the writer himself admits, we falsely differentiate the unity of reality into the self and the not-self. This primitive ignorance puts into motion the wheel of moral existence—an existence of struggle for pleasure and avoidance of pain. Thus life is driven forward by thirst and desire and is alternately lightened by the joy of success and darkened by the dejection of sorrow. But when knowledge or *samyag-gnara* dawns upon man, he realises the foolishness of the self in differentiating itself into a self and a not-self and in setting the latter as an external goal for the meaningless pursuit of life. He then finds himself full and one with the Absolute and sees nothing outside him that is yet to be achieved; there the moral struggle ends. He is then all bliss. But he is not *indifferent*. Only what he previously thought to be outside him is now within him. He works in the

fulness of his heart, so *vāsanā*, which really binds man to the whirling eddy of individuality, leaves him for good. That a *Jībanmukta* is not to remain indifferent and inactive, but has to work for *loka-Samgraha* (world-synthesis) has been very clearly taught in the *Geeta*, particularly in slokas 20–26 of the third Chapter. Sankara in commenting on these and quite independently in his comm. on the Geeta 4.15 emphatically subscribes to this teaching. Again, in his introduction to the *Geeta*, also, Sankara says that an action, in which the motive of individual interest has been supplanted by an idea of pleasing the Lord (*Iavara-prīti*) does not at all cause any bondage. So in the case of a *Jībanmukta* who has identified his *self* with the *Absolute Self*, action is not at all inconsistent with his freedom from bondage. In the *Brahma-sutras* also certain actions (e.g. the *nitya-karmas*) are enjoined even on the *Jībanmuktas*. So it is sufficiently clear that *Jībanmukti* does not at all mean indifference and far less inactivity.

The likening of a *Jībanmukta* to an “inert block of stone” is even more inaccurate and unjustifiable. Because from the empirical standpoint (*Vyāvahārik drsti*) a block is inert and not-self (*Jada* and *anātmā*) whereas the *Jībanmukta* is just the opposite of that as it is consciousness itself (*atmasvarūpa*). Neither does the parallelism hold good from the standpoint of the Absolute (*para-mārtha drsti*), from which all the universe is one consciousness and there is no reason why a block should be selected for this comparison. Thus the parallelism is quite unhappy.

It is only to be added that as the writer speaks from the standpoint of Sankara, i.e. pure monism, the criticism also has been confined to it. Misconceptions regarding *moksha* especially from this standpoint have been too long allowed to act as pleas for much vagrancy and inactivity in Hindu life, and it is time that a serious attempt be made to show that there is no warrant for such a view of life in the teachings of the masters whom these misguided people pretend to follow.

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